



To: Health System Partners
From: Matthew Anderson, President and CEO, Ontario Health
Date: August 30, 2021
Re: **Fall Preparedness**

As we look ahead to the fall, once again we are asking for your partnership and collaboration in responding to a very different, but potentially challenging fourth wave of the pandemic. We recognize the enormous pressure this prolonged pandemic is having on the wellbeing of health care workers across the province and hope that the summer months have been a time to recharge.

In preparing for this next wave, it is important that we not lose sight of how far we have come in our efforts to respond and in our collective resilience in adapting to the changing course of the pandemic.

With this in mind, our provincial and regional planning tables are re-engaged, and we are actively planning for the potential impact of this next pandemic wave.

As mentioned, we anticipate a number of complexities as we prepare for the fall, including:

- Evolving capacity planning given the number of new variables to consider, including (and importantly) the success thus far with vaccinations
- The unique characteristics of the Delta variant
- The potential impact on the paediatric population
- Our focus on health system recovery, with a particular emphasis on preventative care and access to surgeries and procedures
- The unrelenting pressure on our dedicated health human resources

As you know, while our vaccination rates are among the highest in the world, we are seeing rising case counts, primarily among the unvaccinated. We also know that the highly transmissible Delta variant has become the predominant variant in Ontario. While we recover as a health system, we must also remain vigilant to protect those who are most vulnerable and minimize inequities.

In the coming days and weeks, our efforts will be focused on supporting you with the following:

- Modelling and forecasting for better understanding adult and paediatric ICU capacity needs
- A return to active regional and sub-regional coordinating and Incident Management System (IMS) tables, including the Ontario Critical Care COVID-19 Command Centre, with a focus on paediatrics

- Updated guidance through the *Optimizing Care* tool – specifically to assist with balancing recovery goals and real-time response
- Working with the Ministry of Health to confirm the funding process for COVID expenses as well as the approach and funding for temporary COVID ICU beds, while also working on longer-term planning for ICU bed capacity
- Additional immediate and longer-term health human resource relief initiatives

In light of these ongoing complexities, we are asking for your support in undertaking the following:

- Participation, similar to other waves, in provincial, regional, and sub-regional coordinating and IMS tables
- A continued focus on health system recovery that supports non-COVID and COVID-related patient care needs
- Collaborative work with regions to determine, where applicable, ramping back up of certain assessment centres
- Given the transmissibility of this variant, a heightened vigilance on infection prevention and control (IPAC) processes and continued coordination through IPAC hub models

As we have done before, this wave will require a system-wide approach to utilizing our regional and provincial resources. Your ongoing collaboration and leadership will be key to our successful response this fall, as it has been throughout the pandemic. We will be in touch with further updates in the coming weeks.

We are sincerely grateful for all you have done, and are continuing to do, to care for Ontarians.

Matthew Anderson